

Athenian News :
O R,

Dunton's Oracle.

From Saturday March the 18th, to Tuesday March the 21st, 1710.

To those ingenious Ladies who honour'd me with their Platonick Friendship, and with whom I corresponded, by Way of Letter, during those Ten Years I was concern'd in writing the Athenian Mercury.

LADIES,

I Promis'd in my last *Oracle* to insert in this— *The Secret-Post*, or a *Pacquet* from *Athens*, containing all the *Billetts Deux*, tender Letters, Love Cases, and merry Intrigues, that pass'd between Dunton, (alias Philaret) a Member of the Athenian Society, and the most ingenious Ladies in the Queen's Dominions, the whole *Pacquet* being no Fiction, but Letters that really pass'd between Philaret and his Female Querists, and will be continu'd in Dunton's *Oracle*, when he has Room for it, 'till he has discover'd, under feign'd Names, all the Platonick and Love Cases that were sent to the Athenian Mercury for the Ten Years 'twas continu'd.

I desire, Ladies, you wou'd not draw any Conclusion from the Promise I here make of publishing our Platonick Correspondence for Ten Years, (for the Diversion of such that like nothing but Mirth, Humour, and Fancy) that either your Names, or illustrious Characters, shall ever be known, for except you discover 'em, they shall both be an eternal Secret, my Design being to publish my *Secret-Post*, or *Pacquet* from *Athens*, under feign'd Names, and to keep the KEY of those great Secrets in my own Breast, and not to trust it with any other Person; and therefore, Ladies, if you desire your Names and Characters shou'd remain a Secret, you are as secure in it as if the *Billetts Deux*, tender Letters, Love Cases, and merry Intrigues you formerly sent to the Athenian Society, had been all burnt: But having treated your Names and Characters with this great Secrecy and Honour, I thought it wou'd be a very great Loss to the Publick any longer to lock up in my own Cabinet such an invaluable Treasure, as my *Secret-Post* will expose to Sale under borrow'd Names; and tho' I have not the Honour to be personally acquainted with any one of those ingenious Ladies whose Letters are to furnish out a *Secret-Post*, and am never like to see any one of you, (for as a marry'd Platonick I can never desire it) yet I

shall ever desire to stand fair in your good Opinion; even a marry'd Platonick may be allow'd to say, there are Notions in your Letters so delicate that they equally fill him with Astonishment, Pleasure, and Innocence.— Ladies, there is in your Persons and Wit such Charms as wou'd enamour a Stoick, and therefore I thought my self highly honour'd with having your Friendship for Ten Years, and I hope, Ladies, you'll be so diverted with my *Secret-Post* as to consent to a new Correspondence with Dunton's *Oracle*, for I think it impossible so many curious things as appear in your Letters, shou'd not content the Mind which produces them, seeing they ravish him to whom they are address'd, and all with a World of Innocence, for the high Opinion I have of your Virtue, has prepar'd me to see in you all Sorts of Excellencies, both of Body and Mind, without being surpriz'd, or tempted, and you can't do any thing which can astonish me, unless it were something which is mean, or sensual. 'Tis certain, Ladies, you have by your extraordinary Piety and Wit, rais'd your selves as much above your selves as you are above others, (for sincere Piety and a First-rate Poet are a *Phœnix* in this Age, especially among the Ladies) the most ordinary Letter you ever sent to the Athenian Society, is worth more than I dare express, or the Platonick Lovers will ever know how (justly) to value, when they see a Specimen of 'em in my next *Oracle*, where, to make 'em Room, I shall omit what I have further to say to the *British Apollo* 'till my Tenth *Oracle*: But, Ladies, if you are thus charming, or rather Angelick, that I even suspend to correct a Fellow that has greatly and basely wrong'd me, to make Room for your Letters to *Athens*, I think you ought to abide in your old Resolution of keeping your Heart, and never changing it for another, for whatever might be given you in Return, you will be a Loser, and there is no Man, except a Platonick Lover, deserves this Happiness, or I judge has the Boldness to expect it, without the greatest Presumption, shou'd any Man (except 'twere a Cowley, a Dryden, or the more famous and immortal TATLER) entirely one Day possess you, cou'd he make you Queen of the greatest Kingdom on Earth, he wou'd receive more than he cou'd give, and your Friendship alone wou'd make him Master of a Treasure of more Worth than his Crown; and this I gather from those noble Thoughts I have seen in your Letters, and that shining Character you have at K——ton, B——ton, N——wick, and L——coln, and several other Places: And if I speak thus upon only seeing some Rays of your E

Spirits in those many Letters you formerly sent to me, how shou'd I be transported if I had the Happiness to see this same Spirit *glister* in your Eyes, and throw thence Fire and Flames? But more of this in my *Secret-Post*, or *Facquet* from *Abens*, which you are to expect in my next *Oracle*, with a fresh Assurance that I am, Ladies,

Your very humble Servant,

P H I L A R E T.

The Casuistical-Post, or Athenian Mercury.

Quest. In the Quarto Edition of the Bible printed by Bill and Newcomb, 1705, the Contents of the 149th Psalm runs thus; The Prophet exhorteth to praise God for his Love to the Church, and for that Power which he has given to the Church to rule the Consciences of Men. In what Edition of the Bible, and by what Authority were these Contents first publish'd? And what Foundation is there in that Psalm to support any such Opinion as this, that the Church has Power to rule the Consciences of Men?

Answ. Here are two distinct Questions propos'd. 1. In what Version or Edition of the Bible were these Contents first publish'd? It is well known that the Translators of the Bible have assum'd to themselves a Power of forming Arguments or Contents to every Chapter or Section; and sometimes they have made their Choice among such Contents as they found ready drawn to their Hands. The Debt of Gratitude is exceeding great which we all of us owe to the Learning, the Labour and the Faithfulness of those *Emendators* who were encourag'd in that Work by K. James I. But as all things which come thro' the Hands of Men are liable to many Imperfections, so, I think, it ought not to be taken ill, if the *Contents* of Psalm 149. be look'd upon as one Instance of that Kind, tho' we farther it upon those *Emendators* of the *English Version*, employ'd by K. James I. These Contents are also found in a *Quarto Bible* publish'd after the Year 40. and were publish'd (if I am rightly inform'd) before the *Emendations* in K. James the First's Time.

I shall venture to offer my humble Opinion to the Publick, that shou'd the *English Version* of the Bible ever be review'd and strictly compar'd with the *Originals*, it wou'd be proper to lay aside such *Men* as serve at the Altar, lest, seeing they are *Men* of like *Passions* and *Infirmities* with our selves, their *Emendations* shou'd be suspected of *Priest-craft*. Those who have their *Passions* enflam'd with *Party-Zeal*, wou'd be too apt to imagine the Sacred Writings make for the Establishment of their Prejudices and doubtful Opinions. Set but a Number of the *Non-juring Clergy*, another of the *High Flyers*, a Third of the *Moderate Revolution-Clergy*, and a Fourth of *Presbyterian-Ministers*, to the same Task separately, and we shou'd have, at least I fear it, very different *Bibles* and *Translations* from their Hands. *Party* wou'd either get into the *Text*, or the *Contents*; or certainly some convenient Place wou'd be found for it in the *Margin*.

The Second Question is propounded in these Terms, What Foundation is there in that Psalm to support any such Opinion as this, that the Church has Power to rule the Consciences of Men?

A. If ruling the Consciences of Men be design'd to comprehend both *Legislation* and *Judgment*, there is no Foundation for it in that Psalm, or in any other Place, in regard no such Power was ever delegated to the Church

over the Consciences of Men. The sacred Office of the Ministry it self has no farther Commission than to lay before Men the preceptive Part of God's Will and Law, and to urge and plead the Sanctions of it, in order to secure Obedience and Conformity. If ruling the Consciences of Men intend no more than a Publication of God's Will with Authority, there may be no Mischief design'd, but then the Expression is unsafe. It stands ready to encourage the Designs of *Priest-craft*, and smiles too plainly upon the groundless Pretensions of the Romish Church to be suffer'd in the Bibles of Protestants.

If the *Church* in these *Contents* be design'd only of Ministers in sacred Office, it is uncharitable to insinuate that the Laity have no Share in the Conclusion of the 9th Verse, **הָרָר הָוֹא לְכָל־הַסִּדְרִים** this Honour belongs to all the *Saints*. Were there no good Men under the Old Testament but such as had a Share in the Priesthood? And is the Case the same under the New? What a happy thing wou'd it be to get into the Ministry at this rate! If the Laity be included there, it will follow, that this Honour belongs to them as really as to others, to rule the Consciences of Men. What wou'd the Issue of this Doctrine be?

In short, the latter Part of the 149th Psalm puts a *Two-edged Sword* into the Hands of the Church, or the visible Interest of God on Earth, to execute *Vengeance on the Heathen*. This **וְהָרָב פִּיפִוֹת** sword of Two Edges, St. Austin Enner. in *Tract. 194.* lays, *Frameas bis accusas intelligimus Sermonem Domini*; and again, *Sermo Dei Gladius bis accusus*. This *Sword of Two Edges* was, according to his Sense of it, the *Word of God*; and he endeavours to adapt all the high sounding Similitudes that follow, to the glorious Successes of the *Gospel* in the *Heathen World*. He asks the Question, *How is this Vengeance executed among the Heathen? No other way, than by converting and proselizing them to Christianity*. This Success was obtain'd over *Kings and Nobles*, and the *Judgment written was executed*, Deut. 7. 12. and the *Altars, Images and Groves* of the *Heathen* were to be *destroy'd, broke down and burn'd*, i. e. *their Idolatry*. The *Heathen* were to be *destroy'd* in such a manner, that, as St. Austin says, *Quero Paganum & non invenio, Christianus est: Ergo mortuus est Paganus*. *Shou'd one make Search for the Heathen, one cou'd not find him. He's become a Christian, therefore the Heathen is dead*, i. e. He's slain by this *Sword of Two Edges*. Not but that there are plain Footsteps of a more *litteral Destruction* in the *Heathen World*, when God was pleas'd to give his Interest first a Commission and then Success. Upon the whole, I leave it to the Reader's *Judgment*, how remote this *Psalm* must be from asserting any Power to be lodg'd in the *Church* to rule the Consciences of Men, and if he receive any Satisfaction, his *Gratitude* is due to the *ingenious Querist*.

Q. Mr. Dunton, I have spent some of my leisure Time of late in getting a small Acquaintance with the Hebrew, and I'm apt to imagine that others may meet with the same Difficulties in treading the same Steps, as I have done: I doubt not but your learned Friends have considerable Knowledge of that Language. I desire you'd advise me what Measures might be gone upon to render that Tongue more easy and familiar?

A. 'Tis very plain the Study of the Hebrew is too much neglected, and there are few *Divines* who are able to distinguish between the *right* and the *wrong End* of the *Hebrew Bible*. Difficulties almost insuperable are dreamt of, and the Satisfaction of this Study is look'd upon to be a great Way off. If Men wou'd apply themselves but

a little once a Day, or every now and then, they'd find the Light breaking in upon them, and the Pleasure growing upon their Hands. As to the Measures that may be gone upon to make the Difficulties less, I think there are Two very obvious ones that may be nam'd, the one with Regard to the *Grammar*, and the other with Reference to a *Lexicon* for that Tongue. Had we a short *methodical Institution* for that Language, it wou'd very much contribute to the End you propose. The Reverend and ingenious Mr. *Stennet* has perform'd admirably well, and 'tis Pity that his *short and methodical Grammar* shou'd be no more known and valu'd than it is. If he wou'd suffer himself to be prevail'd upon to review, correct and supplement that Performance, I know no Gentleman in *Great Britain* more fit for that Province than himself. As to the *Lexicons* for the Hebrew, tho' a Beginner shou'd have both *Buxtorf* and *Robertson* at his Elbow, yet the Difficulty of finding the Roots is so great and so tedious, that he frequently throws by the Tools, with a final Aversion to that Study, nor can any Importunity perswade him to resume it. In short, I think nothing wou'd more contribute to render the Hebrew easy and pleasurable than a *Lexicon* for it in the same Method with *Robertson's Greek Lexicon*, and *Hill's* upon *Schrivelius*. A Work of this Nature wou'd shew the *Radix* immediately, by turning Alphabetically to the *Noun* or *Verb*, let the former be in *whatever State* or *Number* with its *Prefix* and *Suffix*; and let the *latter* be in what *Tense* or *Conjugation*, with all the Changes and *Anomolies* that can happen to it. In this Case the *Lexicon* wou'd shew the *Anomoly* and *Radix*, and our *Grammars* wou'd be eas'd of them, and the Learner too in a great Measure, at least the Difficulties wou'd be overcome insensibly and with Pleasure. I foresee no Objection against this Second *Proposal* but one, and that is, 'twould swell the *Lexicon* beyond a reasonable Bulk. In answer to this, supposing *Robertson's Lexicon* be tollerably compleat, I dare undertake to prove, that a *New one* in the Method I propose wou'd not exceed the Bulk of *Robertson's*; nay, it might be brought into less Compass, if the Size of the Character were a little less. I give, however, solemn Warning to all such mercenary Scribblers as may, perhaps, be able to interpret a Verse or two of the *first Psalm*, that they meddle not with this Undertaking. I know no Gentleman every way so well qualify'd for this Design as the Reverend Mr. *Stennet*, whom I mention'd above, both with Regard to his Acquaintance with the Hebrew, the clear Solidity of his Judgment, and his admirable English Stile, which I judge to be the most convenient for Management of this Design. If the *Querist*, or the *Publick* want a *Specimen* to shew how feasable the Design is, I am ready to comply so far, but want Time for more.

Q. Mr. Dunton, Having read, with some Degree of Satisfaction, the Reverend Mr. Hoadly's Answer to Dr. Atterbury's Latin Sermon, I had the Curiosity to look into the Doctor's Sermon, and being got the Length of P. 9. where the Doctor cites the 7th Verse of Rom. 13. in these Words, Reddite omnibus Debita; cui Tributum, [debetur, scilicet,] Tributum [reddite] cui Vectigal, Vectigal; cui Timorem, Timorem; cui Honorem, Honorem; I was siez'd with a violent Suspicion of *false Latin*. Whether is the Syntax of that Quotation defensible? Shou'd I be right in my Conjecture, 'twill encourage me, perhaps, to send you some further Remarks upon the Stile of that Discourse. He that once shoots and hits will be always shooting.

A. This *Querist* is undoubtedly in the Right, and the

Quotation false Latin. If the Doctor had read the Verse entirely out of his Latin Testament, he wou'd have prevented the Mistake, whereas the Greek is thus translated, *cui Tributum debetur, Tributum; cui Vectigal, Vectigal; cui Timor, Timorem; cui Honor, Honorem*. Had he made the first *Vectigal, Timor & Honor* only Nom. Cases, his *Debetur* in the first Crotchet might have serv'd well enough, but when it comes afterwards to be repeated, *cui Timorem* [debetur, scilicet] &c. the Business is exceeding gross, and a Lad at *Westminster* wou'd have been whip'd for it. 'Tis true the Greek has all the Substantives in the Accus. Case, *πολλὸν φέρει, τὸν φέρει, πολλὸν τὸν φέρει πολλὸν τιμῆσθαι, &c.* So that I prefer honest old *Jerom's Translation* in this Particular, who has it, *cui Tributum, Tributum; cui Vectigal, Vectigal; cui Timorem, Timorem; cui Honorem, Honorem*. But in this Case the Doctor's *Debetur* is quite out of Play. I hope this Admonition may be of Service to the *Clergy*, it being really necessary they shou'd regard their Latin a little better. The ingenious *Querist* was not the first that remark'd this Quotation; I have heard it said upon this Occasion, *That the Doctor being so full of absolute Non-Resistance, and Passive Obedience, 'twas a Wonder all the Verbs he makes use of in that Sermon were not in the Passive Voice*.

Q. Whether returning *Answers to all Questions*, concealing the *Querist*, was a new *Invention*, and the sole *Contrivance* of Mr. Dunton? And whether can the *Athenian Mercury* properly claim the *Name and Notion* of a *Project*?

A. 'Tis well known, the *Athenian Mercuries* were the happy *Project* of *John Dunton*, to which he must therefore, in common Justice, be entitl'd, and none but the *D*—*I* from *Delphos*, alias the *British Apollo*, wou'd have had the Conscience to steal his Property. The *Gentlemen Performers* of that Paper, as they stile themselves, have pleaded to this Charge. See *Brit. Apollo*, Vol. II. Numb. —. What they offer is introduc'd by a *Prose Question*, but their rhyming with the Barber that Week, had so harmoniz'd their Heads, that they keep pretty faithfully to the Tune.—

*In my Walks, the other Day,
I chanc'd to cast my Eyes, &c.*

The *Querist*, tho' 'tis probable the Matter in Question was propos'd and stated by *M. Smith*, is so full of Impatience, that he decides the whole, and gives it against *Dunton*, in Favour of *Apollo*, leaving no Manner of Occasion for so much as a Note of Interrogation. Were but all your *Querists* so kind, *Smith*, what a Mercy wou'd you think it! Or rather, when Men may form their own Difficulties, how easy do they make them! The Answer, begging Pardon for the Impropriety of the Word, begins thus. *To call the answering Questions a Project we think a very ridiculous Notion*. According to the universal Acceptation of the Word, a *Project* is a new *Invention*, principally as to the *Matter, Subject, and Operations* of it. Suppose this Definition of a *Project* shou'd give us the distinct *Idea* of the Word, yet still the *Athenian Mercuries* will properly claim both the *Name and Notion* of a *Project*. 'Tis true, *answering Questions* was no new *Invention*; *Apollo* can bear Evidence for you, that the *Oracles* which deluded the Heathen World were his own *Project*, tho' 'tis hop'd you don't claim from him, notwithstanding both your *Title* and the *Management* have furnish'd Occasion for very strong Presumptions. But, tho' *answering Questions* was long ago the *Project* of the Devil, and tho' *Dunton* cou'd not take his *Oath* upon it, that nothing of that Kind had been practis'd before, yet the Manner

of Operation, to keep true to your Definition, *in returning Answers to all Questions, concealing the Querists, was a new Invention.* This new Invention was the sole Contrivance of John Dunton, it was set on Foot and manag'd by him. Another Argument of yours, to be exceeding civil to it, runs thus. *But were the Athenian Mercuries, or the Design of answering Questions, concealing the Querists, a new Project, what Right has Mr. Dunton to it, when the Answers to the Questions in the Athenian Mercury were the Effects of other Men's Labours?* Suppose, Smith, that Mr. Dunton had not writ one Line in all the Athenian Mercuries, the Project had been no less his own. The new Invention was his Thought, he form'd the Design, and tho' he wanted Hands for Execution, yet he paid 'em well. O what a Blessing wou'd it be to poor Authors, Sirs, wou'd all Booksellers be so kind to 'em as Dunton once was! I never thought 10*l.* a sufficient Gratitude where a full Thousand has been got by a Copy, (for that Sum at least has been got by the several Editions of my Athenian Oracle) I cou'd give several Instances where (a Copy selling beyond Expectation) I voluntarily gave the same Sum for every new Edition that I gave for the first. I gave Mr. Sault, a Member of the Athenian Society, 3*l.* for Three Sheets of a certain Narrative, (for which he gave me a Receipt in full) but the Narrative coming to Eight Editions, I voluntarily gave him Eight Three Pounds; so that Mr. Sault receiv'd Twenty Four Pounds where he expected but Three, and yet I got above an Hundred Pound by the Narrative. Were all Booksellers thus grateful (for I can prove the Matter of Fact) there wou'd be no Necessity for Authors to form into Societies, and joyn their Stocks, to carry on some Design upon their own Bottom. Such *begging Clauses, as Irinted for the Authors,* wou'd not be met with. Upon the Foot of this same Argument of yours every Man might be turn'd out of the Possession of his Estate, no Right or Claim wou'd be left him, if he were so unhappy as to want Servants to manure, and plow, and reap, and hedge. Woe be to him if there be any Part of *Husbandry* which he has not either the Skill, or the Leisure to do with his own Hands! This Title fails, and the Chancery won't relieve him! The Athenian Mercuries were not all writ by the Hack, some of the most celebrated Answers in the whole were writ by my own Hand, (as some still living can testify) tho' that Matter don't strengthen my Title.

I don't pretend my Title to this Project by Virtue of a Patent, but upon the Foot of that Right to my own Thought and Invention, which is the Foundation of all Patents of this Kind. Tho' there be no Patent, yet the necessary Restraints of common Justice and Humanity are broke thro' by all Invaders. When you say, 'tis near Twenty Years since Mr. Dunton laid his Project by, you publish to the World a material Lye, for 'tis false in Fact. I resum'd my Project in the Post-Angel Ten Years after the Athenian Society were adjourn'd, and manag'd it principally with my own Pen Two Years. In 1704. the Society sate down again, and publish'd the same Project Monthly under the Title of *Athenæ Redivivæ, or the new Athenian Oracle.* Let the Reader judge upon the whole, whether it ben't, at least, a material Falshood, to affirm that I left off my Project near Twenty Years ago.

If an Author sees it proper to give his Project a little Rest, entring notwithstanding his Claim to it from Time to Time, both publickly and in proper Form, this can,

by no Means, justify another *in coming forcibly upon the Premisses and breaking the Soil.* The Memory must yet be fresh, how much the Athenian Mercuries did both please and instruct, nor is the Humour worn out, otherwise an unperforming Apollo cou'd not have liv'd out so long. But it must be remember'd, the Difference of the Air is considerable betwixt the Latitudes of 37 and 48. His Genius sleeps and starves, and were he not wrap'd in Petticoats, his old Vehicle, he wou'd be as dumb in Britain as he was in Greece near 1700 Years ago. Wou'd the Publick allow any Debenture for him, 'twere the best Way to export him. Upon second Thoughts, I renounce him both as to Name and Thing, as heartily as I did in Baptism, for I am very sure that Apollo and his Writings in plain English are the Devil and his Works. Shou'd the Devil preach very Orthodox Divinity, 'tis however proper to silence him. We have our Saviour's Example for it; and when St. Paul met with Apollo's Devil, or rather with Apollo himself, at Philippi, he look'd upon his Testimony, tho' very true in it self, to be insufferable, as it came from him. *Act 16. 16, 17, 18.* There the πνεῦμα πνεύματος, Spirit of Divination, the very same that gave Denomination to Apollo's Oracle, made Proclamation, that Paul and Silas were the Servants of the most high God, and shew'd the Way of Salvation. The Testimony griev'd St. Paul, and he dispossess'd the Devil, for, take Notice of it, he was got into a Girl. If the D——l may answer Cases of Conscience, and solve Difficulties in Divinity, it may easily be conjectur'd what the Issue will prove: I therefore promise the Reader, that whatever Questions of any Value are answer'd by Apollo, shall be re-answer'd in my Athenian Mercury.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

There is already publish'd of the Three Thousand Posts that are to compleat Dunton's Oracle, viz. 1. Dunton's Post, or his Dying Farewel to this Life and World. 2. The Mob Post, or Secret History of Sacheverelism. 3. The Whipping-Post, or A War with Vice and Error. 4. The Lying-Post, or Fictions prov'd Realities by Way of Paradox. To each of these Three Thousand Posts will be added, The Caustical-Post, or Athenian Mercury, resolving all nice and curious Questions. Next Saturday will be publish'd The Secret-Post, or a Pacquet from Athens, containing all the Billes Deux, tender Letters, Love Cases, and merry Intrigues, the formerly pass'd between Philaret (a Member of the Athenian Society) and the most ingenious Ladies in the Queen's Dominions, for the Ten Years the Athenian Mercury was continu'd. The next Posts to be publish'd are, The Penitent-Post, or both Sexes at Confession.— Spiritual Lunacy, or The Mad-Post.— The Athenian-Post, or a Miscellany of Thoughts wholly new.— The lost Rib restor'd, or The Conjugal Post.— A Trial of Skill, or The Duelling-Post.— This is farther to give Notice, that in the Rhyming-Post will be inserted, An Answer to several Poetical Questions; as also the Poetical Translations and Paraphrase that was sent by a young Gentleman from Cambridge, with great Variety of other new and diverting Poems. This is farther to give Notice, that the Gentleman who promises to give away Five Hundred of Dunton's dying Farewell Honour, Riches, Pleasures, may see the Copy of it about Two Weeks hence at the Sword in New-street; and I shall give away One Thousand of the Preaching-Post to the most eminent Clergy-men in the Queen's Dominions, being willing that Dunton's Oracle shou'd live or die by the Judgment of Men in the brightest Parts.